

A History of Lake Ouachita

Royal, Arkansas

- 700 – 1,000 miles of shoreline
- Over 200 islands
- 20 Corps recreation areas
- 9 Marinas, 1 State Park
- Crystal clear, cool and clean water
- World class striper fishing



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US Army Corps of Engineers
BUILDING STRONG®



Approximately 1.2 million people visit Lake Ouachita each year. With 40,000 acres of water and 20,000 acres of public land, Ouachita offers an abundance of recreational opportunities. The Corps of Engineers maintains over 1100 campsites and 18 boat ramps on Lake Ouachita. Boating, fishing, scuba diving and island camping are especially popular here.



History of Lake Ouachita

- **Harvey Couch wanted to name the new lake, “Lake Couch”.**
- **The Great Depression caused the government to terminate Couch’s permit in 1941.**
- **In 1944 the Flood Control Act was passed. Money was appropriated in 1946 for a Dam to be built on the Ouachita River. Farms, residents and gravesites were moved.**
- **Buckville Baptist church was moved 1/4 mile to higher ground. It is the only remaining structure that was re-located.**



A Quick History

- Only Federal land management agency older than the country-1775
- Leading provider of water based recreation in country.
- Second largest outdoor recreation visitation of Federal government.



First Inhabitants

- Washita, Caddo, Osage, Tensas, Chickasaw, and Choctaw Native American Tribes once inhabited the Ouachita River Valley.
- Ouachita comes from the Native American “Washita” which means Good Hunting Grounds and Sparkling silver water.
- Many Indian mounds were excavated by University of Arkansas in 1939.



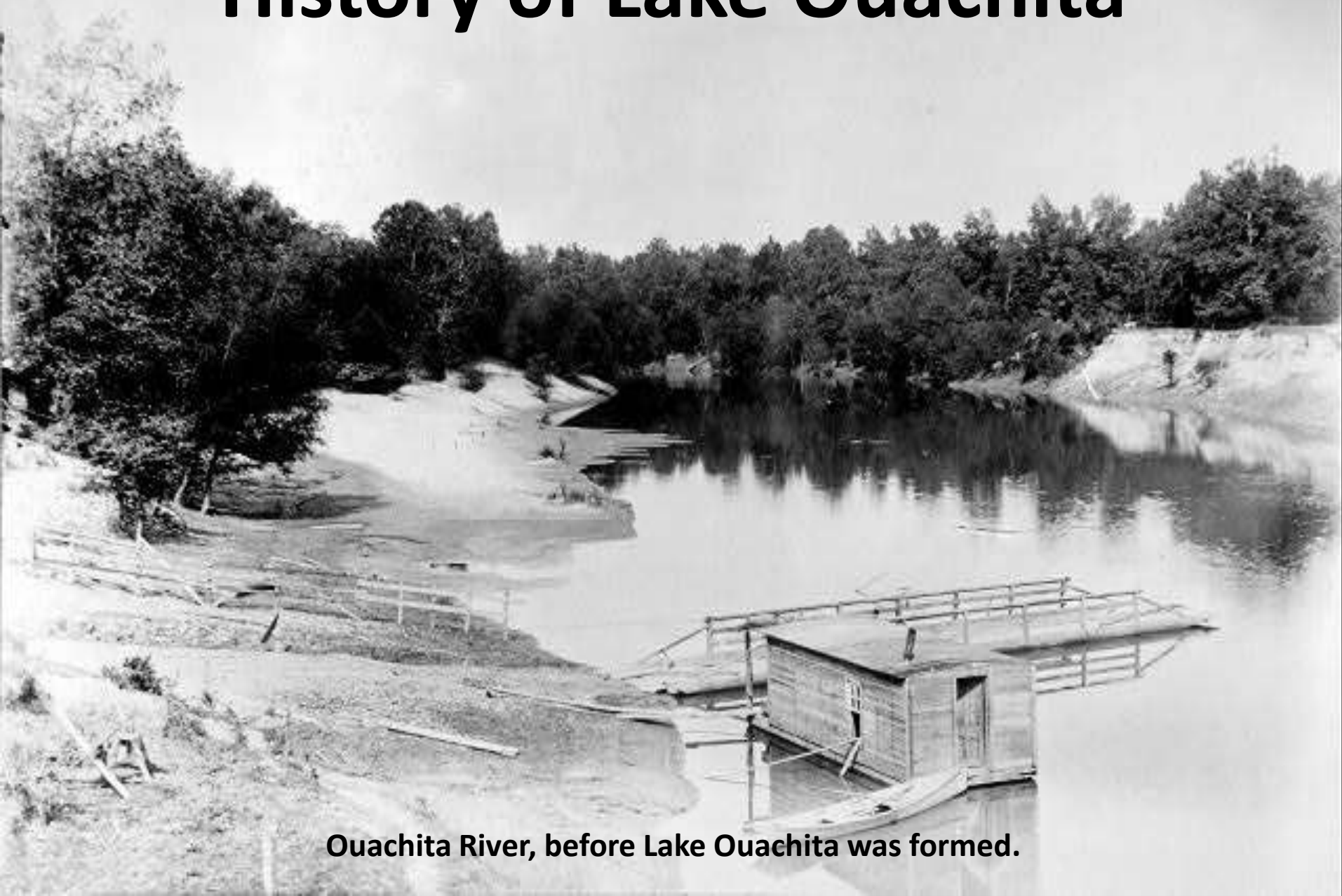
Early Settlers

- The French were the earliest settlers in the 1700's.
- Hernando DeSoto was one of the first explorers to document life along Ouachita River.
- After Louisiana Purchase in 1803, President Thomas Jefferson commissioned the Hunter-Dunbar Expedition to explore and chart the Ouachita River.
- In 1836, Arkansas became a state and the Ouachita River became a highway for transportation and commerce including steamboat travel.



The lower Ouachita River near Arkadelphia.

History of Lake Ouachita



Ouachita River, before Lake Ouachita was formed.

History of Lake Ouachita



- Lower Ouachita River Valley flooded often
- Federal Government conducted surveys in 1870, and in the 1890's recommended a series of dams be constructed on the Ouachita River
- In 1930's government started buying land, paying an average of \$30 per acre
- Harvey Couch of AP&L wanted to build the new dam above Lake Hamilton for electrical power production. AP&L had already constructed Remmell and Carpenter dams.

Cutting and Logging of Timber



One of the problems settlers to the area faced was flooding along the Ouachita River. The river dropped sharply from Blakely Mountain to Arkadelphia and this caused the stream flow to vary considerably. In July of 1870 Congress authorized the first of many studies of the river to determine what could be done to reduce flooding and improve navigation.



Flooding on Ouachita River before Lake Ouachita was formed.

Government engineers recommended a series of dams be constructed on the upper Ouachita but the improvements to navigation did not justify the investment of taxpayer money. However, private enterprise began to express interest in constructing the dams in order to generate electrical power. In 1924 Arkansas Power and Light created Remmel Dam and Lake Catherine. Carpenter Dam and Lake Hamilton were created in 1932. The third dam was to be constructed at Blakely Mountain and be a joint effort between Arkansas Power and Light and the U.S. Government in order to develop water power and create flood control. In 1939 Arkansas Power and Light requested to delay the dam's construction due to economic problems. The Federal Power Commission denied the request and terminated Arkansas Power and Light's permit to construct the dam in 1941.



House in Cedar Glades prior to Formation of Lake Ouachita

The towns of Cedar Glades, Old Buckville, Flea Bend, Oakwood, and White Plains areas are now under the waters of Lake Ouachita.

History of Lake Ouachita



Buckville Baptist Church



Image courtesy K.D. Meredith,
Buckville website

In order to create Lake Ouachita, the federal government had to obtain the land in the dam and reservoir area. Land was purchased from the dam upstream, in the order it was to be inundated. Roads were rerouted and graves were moved to new cemeteries out of the reservoir area. Landowners cut the good timber and brush was cut and burned or left for fish habitat. The timber that was not cut is still visible today during low water periods. Buildings such as schools, houses and churches were demolished or moved. The only remaining structure is the Buckville Baptist Church. The church was rolled on pine logs a quarter-mile to the north side of the cemetery, where it still stands today. The only things remaining of the communities of Cedar Glades (Harold), Flea Bend (Aultville), Oakwood (Chalybeate Spring), and White Plains are the people and the memories.

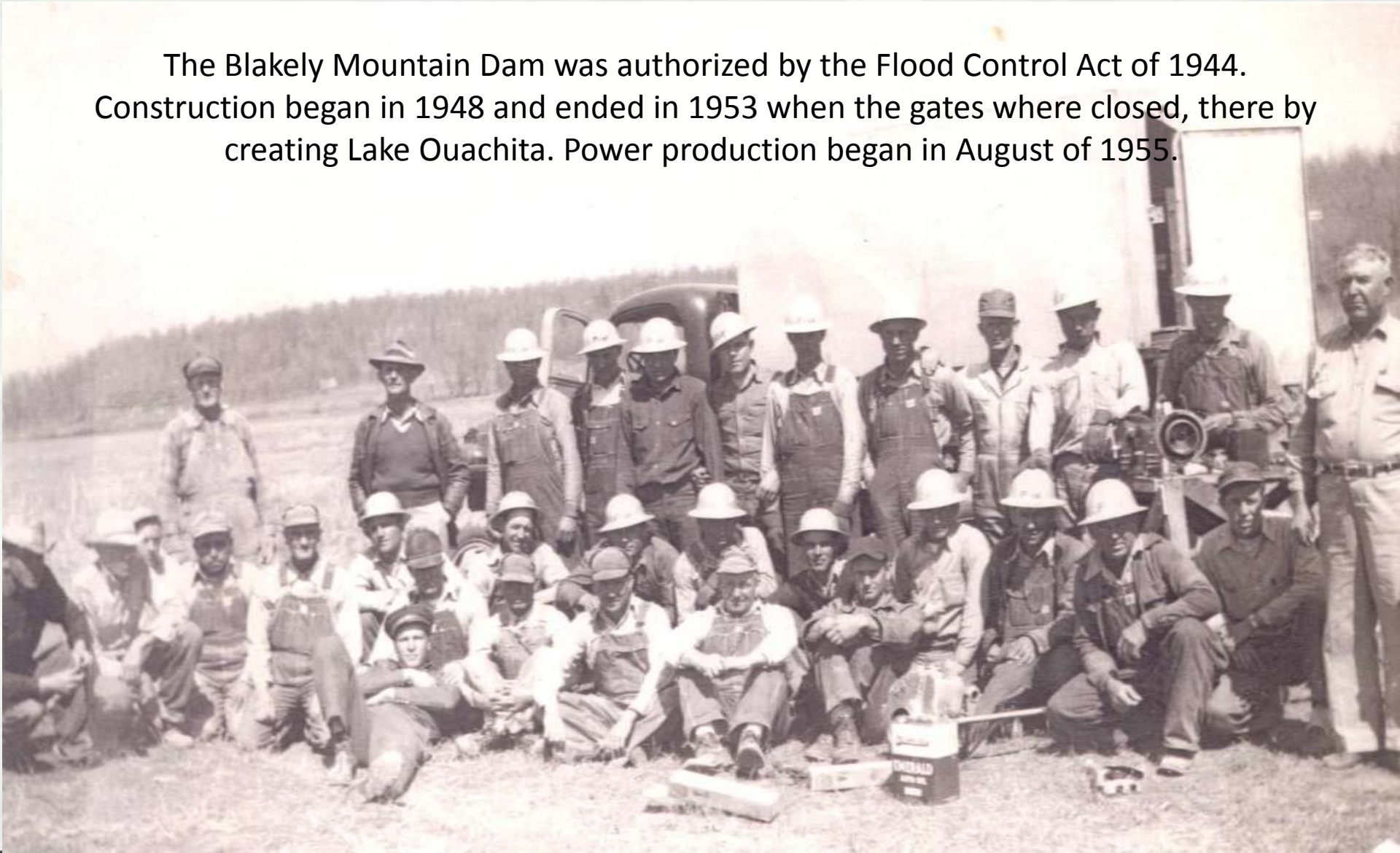


Blakely Mountain Dam construction

Construction of Blakely Mountain Dam began in 1948 and ended in 1952. Power production began under contract with AP&L on July 17, 1955.

Blakely Dam Workers

The Blakely Mountain Dam was authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944. Construction began in 1948 and ended in 1953 when the gates were closed, thereby creating Lake Ouachita. Power production began in August of 1955.



Construction – 1st Layer



Blakely Mountain Dam Construction Contracts

- Spillway construction
(August 1947 – September 1948)
- Tunnels and Appurtenances
(June 1948 – May 1950)
- Dam and Intake Structure
(February 1950 – September 1953)
- Power Plant
(May 1952 – October 1955)



Then.....



Now.....

Downstream Drainage Base (2nd Layer)





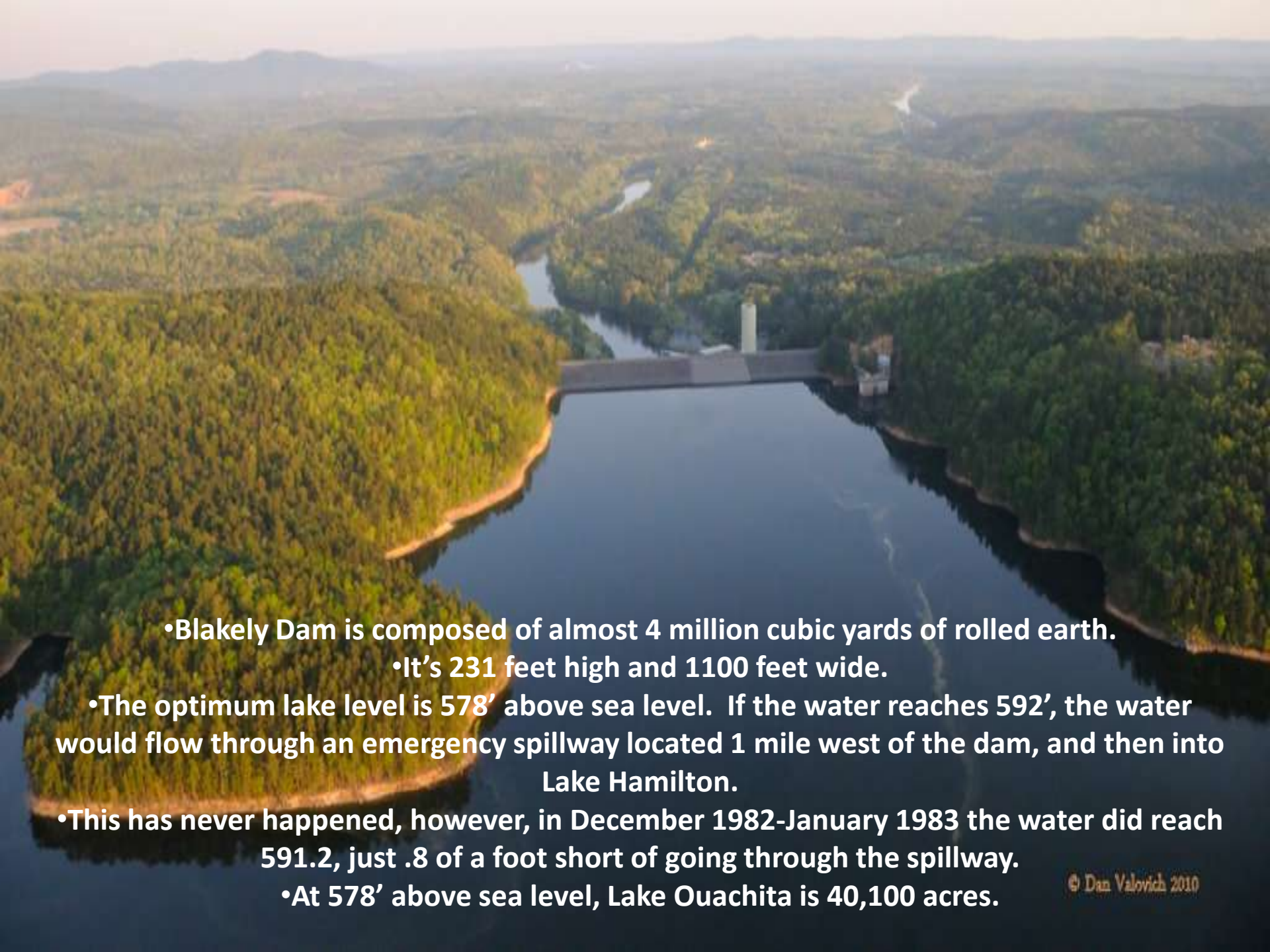
Reinforcement for base of intake structure.

Now...



Then...





- Blakely Dam is composed of almost 4 million cubic yards of rolled earth.
- It's 231 feet high and 1100 feet wide.
- The optimum lake level is 578' above sea level. If the water reaches 592', the water would flow through an emergency spillway located 1 mile west of the dam, and then into Lake Hamilton.
- This has never happened, however, in December 1982-January 1983 the water did reach 591.2, just .8 of a foot short of going through the spillway.
- At 578' above sea level, Lake Ouachita is 40,100 acres.

An aerial photograph showing a large, multi-story building with a grey roof and light-colored walls, situated on a hill covered in dense forest. The building is surrounded by a cleared area with some construction equipment. In the foreground, a tall, white and red striped tower stands on a small clearing. The background features a large, deep blue lake with forested islands and peninsulas. The text "The Ouachita, DeGray and Greeson Project Office" is overlaid in white on the lake.

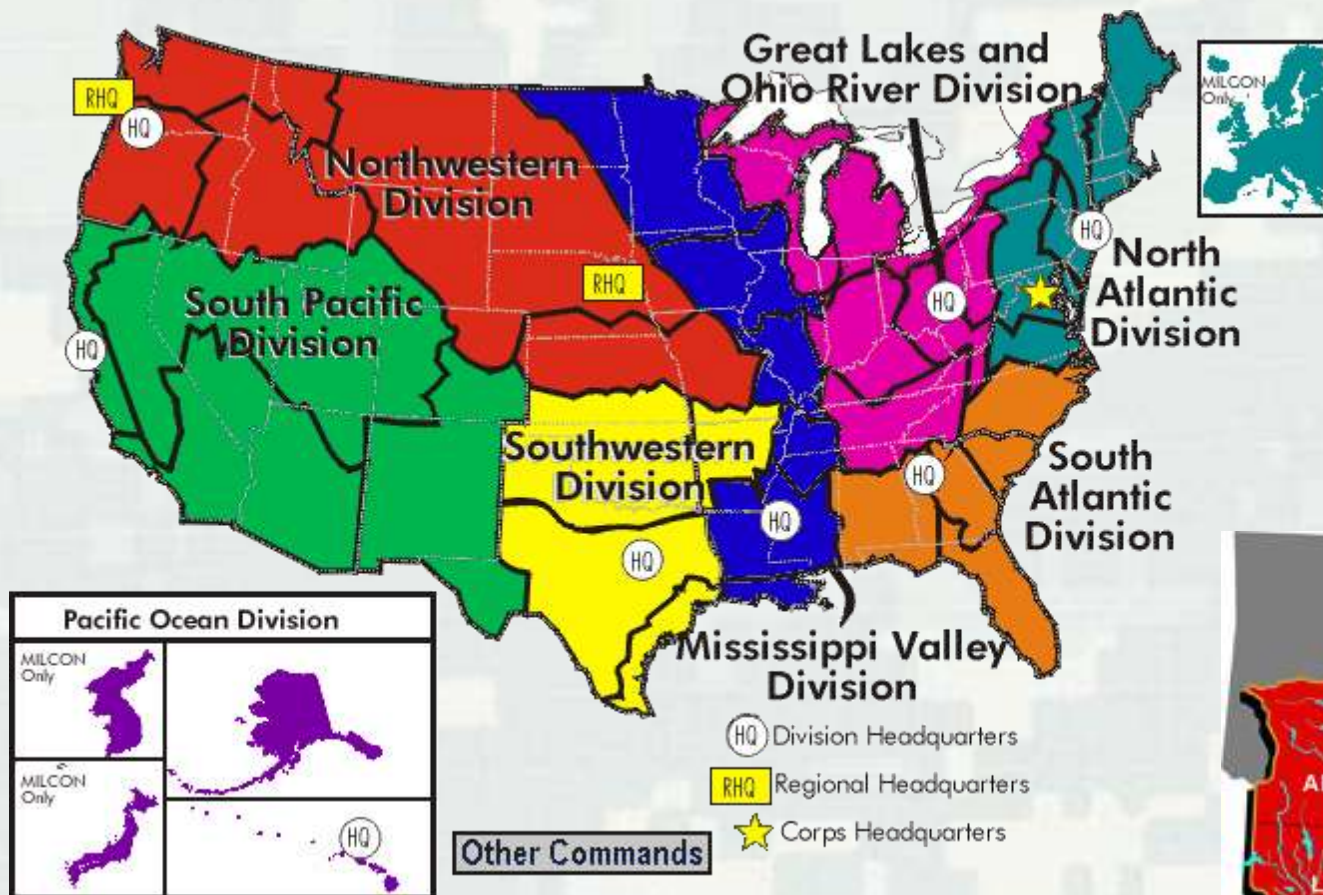
The Ouachita, DeGray and Greeson Project Office

Corps Facts: Civil Works Recreation

- **Recreation Areas: 4,340 at 456 Corps Projects**
- **10% of the US Population visits at least one Corps project each year**
- **Spent by Visitors at Projects: \$10 billion**



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- A photograph of a blue and white tent pitched in a forest of tall pine trees. The tent is located on a dirt clearing near a body of water, which is visible in the background. The trees are tall and slender, with green foliage. The tent is a dome-style tent with a blue base and white upper sections. The background shows a calm body of water and distant hills under a clear sky.
- **Total Project - 62,000 acres**
 - **Surface Acres - 40,100/48,300**
 - **Shoreline Miles - 690/975**
 - **Recreation Areas - 19**
 - **Commercial Concessions - 9 + State Park**



Role of the Ranger

- For many citizens, the Park Rangers at the recreation sites will represent their only contact with the Corps of Engineers.
- Park Rangers wear many hats – interpreters, safety officers, educators, regulators, biologists, land use rangers, foresters, natural resource specialists and many others.



Ranger Activities: Interpretation

- Water Safety
- Navigation
- Environmental Ethics
- Bald Eagles
- History
- Environment
- Hydrology
- Engineering



Ranger Activities: Field Patrol

- Protect the resource from people
- Protect people from the resource
- Protect people from themselves



Ranger Activities: Environmental Stewardship

- Controlled burns
- Timber marking and harvest
- Wildlife food plots
- Fish attractors
- Trash collections





Lake Ouachita, Vicksburg District

<http://www.mvk.usace.army.mil/lakes/AR/Ouachita/index.php>

*Special thanks to Dan Valovich for the
beautiful aerial photographs of Lake
Ouachita.*

